

FREE LIBRARY OF PHILADELPHIA, SOUTHWARK BRANCH  
1108 South 5th Street  
Philadelphia  
Philadelphia  
Pennsylvania

HABS PA-6768  
*PA-6768*

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
1849 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20240-0001

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

### FREE LIBRARY OF PHILADELPHIA, SOUTHWARK BRANCH

HABS No. PA-6768

Location: 1108 South 5<sup>th</sup> Street, Philadelphia, Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania

Present Owner: Greater Philadelphia Oversees Chinese Association

Present Occupant: Dr. Sun Yat Sen Bilingual School and Senior Citizen Group

Present Use: school and cultural center

Significance: Southwark was one of twenty-five branch libraries constructed between 1904 and 1930 for the Free Library of Philadelphia using a \$1.5 million grant from the Carnegie Corporation. Andrew Carnegie's public library construction grants were a major impetus to the growth of these institutions throughout the country. Philadelphia was second only to New York City in the size of the Carnegie grant and number of branch libraries constructed. Each jurisdiction receiving Carnegie library funds was responsible for providing a site and operating expenses equal to ten percent of the cost of construction. Prior to receiving the Carnegie funds in 1903, branch libraries of the Free Library of Philadelphia (founded 1891) were housed in a variety of preexisting structures. The Carnegie library construction campaign provided twenty-five purpose-built branch libraries for the City of Philadelphia, each designed within the ideal of efficient operation and using fashionable, if conservative, architectural forms and motifs.

Southwark was the thirteenth Carnegie branch library opened by the Free Library of Philadelphia. Plans for the structure were approved by the Free Library Board of Trustees Carnegie Fund Committee on November 25, 1910 and the branch opened to the public on November 8, 1912. The branch was located in a densely populated area of South Philadelphia and was immediately in great demand among the surrounding immigrant community. The Southwark Branch was designed by Philadelphia architect David Knickerbacker Boyd.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

1. Date of erection: 1911-12, opened November 8, 1912
2. Architect: David Knickerbacker Boyd
3. Original and subsequent owners/uses:  
Free Library of Philadelphia branch library, 1912-1963  
Greater Philadelphia Oversees Chinese Association, school and cultural center – present
4. Builder, contractor, suppliers<sup>1</sup>:  
General contractor - F.A. Havens & Company, \$36,823  
Heating - John P. Smith, \$5,800  
Electrical - United Electric Construction Co., \$1,600
5. Original plans and construction: D. K. Boyd's plans for the Southwark Branch were approved by the Free Library on November 25, 1910 and construction proceeded during 1911-12.
6. Alterations and additions: The library retains its original appearance on the exterior except for changes to the window openings. Only limited access to the interior was possible, but it appears to be heavily altered, with additional floors inserted into the formerly high ceiled space.

B. Historical Context:

In the nineteenth century most libraries in the United States were private or available only to subscribers. Starting in the late nineteenth century, many cities began to found "free library" systems with the goal of providing educational material and services to a wider array of citizens, particularly the burgeoning immigrant population. The Free Library of Philadelphia was founded in 1891 and proceeded to establish a central library and a network of neighborhood branches. Despite ambitious goals, however, these libraries remained rather modest affairs housed in rented space and utilizing mainly donated collections and volunteer staffing.

During this same period the library construction philanthropy of wealthy industrialist Andrew Carnegie would have a profound effect on both the development of professional library standards and the evolution of the building type. The Free Library of Philadelphia received a \$1.5 million grant in January 1903 from Andrew Carnegie and the Carnegie Corporation to build thirty branch libraries.<sup>2</sup> Carnegie had been engaged in

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<sup>1</sup> Carnegie Fund Committee Meeting Minutes, (12 May 1911), 5.

<sup>2</sup> While the original grant stipulated funding for 30 libraries at \$50,000 each, rising construction costs caused the number to be scaled back in 1918. For the remaining branches, the Carnegie fund provided only part of the construction cost with the city or neighborhood groups making up the difference. See letter from Librarian John Ashhurst to James Bertram, Secretary, Carnegie Corporation officially changing the

library building philanthropy since 1886, but the program was expanded to jurisdictions outside of his personal and business sphere only in 1898. Carnegie library historian George Bobinski calls this later period the “wholesale phase” of Carnegie’s library philanthropy. From 1898 to 1919, he gave over \$39 million to 1,406 communities. The unprecedented scale of this effort contrasts with the “retail phase” between 1886 and 1898 when Carnegie donated \$1.8 million to six communities.<sup>3</sup> The \$1.5 million gift to Philadelphia’s fledgling free library system was quite generous. Only New York City, which received a \$5.2 million grant for sixty-six libraries in 1899, built more branches using Carnegie funds. The next largest grants went to Baltimore and Cleveland; each city built fourteen libraries.<sup>4</sup>

In Philadelphia there was a delay while the various government agencies worked out a mechanism to legally accept and administer such unprecedented largesse. According to Bobinski, “the Pennsylvania State legislature had to approve an act authorizing the Philadelphia city council to enter into contracts with the trustees of the public library so that the arrangements necessary for receiving the Carnegie gift could be carried into effect.”<sup>5</sup> After a year of bureaucratic maneuvering, the state legislature finally passed the law enabling the city to officially accept the gift. The final step before the Free Library could proceed was an ordinance approving this arrangement passed by Mayor John Weaver in January 1904. John Thomson quickly sent a letter to James Bertram, Carnegie’s personal secretary and gatekeeper for the library philanthropy program, expressing his relief that the Free Library could move forward with branch construction:

I have the pleasure of informing you that I have this morning received from the Clerk of Councils official notice that the Mayor has signed the Ordinance accepting Mr. Carnegie’s splendid gift to the City of Philadelphia. The matter has been one of great anxiety. . . . Arrangements are on foot to accept 4 or 5 sites and it is hoped that the preliminary arrangements for locating the system of Branch Libraries, made possible by Mr. Carnegie’s munificence, will be put in active motion at once. . . . I think we shall be able very rapidly to show our appreciation of what Mr. Carnegie has put it in our power to do.<sup>6</sup>

The year-long delay in officially accepting the gift gave the Free Library time to quietly prepare to construct new branch buildings and move rapidly once approval came.

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total number of Carnegie branches to “25 or 26,” (11 October 1918), Carnegie Corporation Correspondence microfilm, Reel 25, Special Collections, Butler Library, Columbia University, New York.

<sup>3</sup> George S. Bobinski, *Carnegie Libraries: Their History and Impact on American Public Library Development*, (Chicago: American Library Association, 1969), 13-14.

<sup>4</sup> Bobinski 229, 231. On the New York branches see Mary B. Dierickx, *The Architecture of Literacy: The Carnegie Libraries of New York City*, (New York City: The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Art and Science & NYC Department of General Services, September 1996).

<sup>5</sup> Bobinski 44.

<sup>6</sup> Letter, John Thomson to James Bertram (13 January 1904), Carnegie Corporation Correspondence microfilm, Reel 25, Special Collections, Butler Library, Columbia University, New York.

Carnegie did not specify architectural designs or review plans at this time, but he did express a strong preference that the branch libraries include lecture rooms.<sup>7</sup> In a letter officially accepting Carnegie's gift, Free Library Board of Trustees President Joseph G. Rosengarten noted that the Trustees "concur[red] fully" with his lecture room suggestion and planned to expand the already successful Free Library lecture program.<sup>8</sup>

Beyond a general desire for new branch buildings and an interest in including lecture rooms, it is not clear what guidelines or models informed the Free Library as they developed a fairly consistent branch library plan for their city. When Philadelphia received its Carnegie grant in 1903 there was no official design review by Carnegie or his staff. By 1908 Carnegie's secretary James Bertram had to approve the building plans for all new grants. The Carnegie publication "Notes on the Erection of Library Buildings" [sic.] was first issued in 1911 by Bertram.<sup>9</sup> Bertram was largely motivated by a distaste for what he viewed as wasteful features or extravagant designs that went over budget. He advocated prioritizing the needs of librarians over the opinions of architects. While the Philadelphia branch library plans progressed independent of Carnegie design oversight, it appears both were developing simultaneously and in harmony with the latest precepts in library planning for open stack branch libraries. The HABS research on the Carnegie branches in Philadelphia showed that the former Southwark branch was a modification of the typical Free Library branch form due to a small site.

The Board of Trustees of the Free Library formed a Carnegie Fund Committee in March 1904 to oversee the details of this ambitious branch building effort. In response to a request from the Carnegie Fund Committee for instructions on how to select architects, the Board of Trustees implemented an ad hoc system. They sought to avoid the expense and complication of holding competitions so instead proposed to appoint an architect as branch sites were chosen. Selection seems to have been based on reputation and personal contacts, with some architects asking to be considered as work on the branches proceeded. The written record is thin on this point, but it seems apparent librarian John Thomson and assistant librarian John Ashhurst were instrumental in this process. John Thomson served as secretary of the Carnegie Fund Committee and the Free Library's leading staff member on all matters. Ashhurst's assistant librarian position was specifically created by the Board of Trustees "in order to undertake part of the very heavy extra work that would now be involved in carrying out the Andrew Carnegie Branch Library Building scheme."<sup>10</sup>

In the interest of moving quickly to open new branch buildings, projects on donated or city-owned property typically were launched first. Later branches would be

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<sup>7</sup> "Carnegie Offers \$1,500,000 to City," *Philadelphia Times*, 7 January 1903, clipping in Carnegie Corporation Correspondence microfilm, Reel 25, Special Collections, Butler Library, Columbia University, New York.

<sup>8</sup> Letter, J. G. Rosengarten to Andrew Carnegie, (5 March 1904), Carnegie Corporation Correspondence microfilm, Reel 25, Special Collections, Butler Library, Columbia University, New York.

<sup>9</sup> Abigail Van Slyck, *Free to All: Carnegie Libraries & American Culture, 1890-1920*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 35-36.

<sup>10</sup> Free Library of Philadelphia, Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes, (12 February 1904).

built on a mix of donated and purchased sites to ensure even distribution across the city. In the 1908 *Annual Report*, Free Library of Philadelphia Board of Trustees President J. G. Rosengarten wrote:

The steady increase of Branch Library building shows that the value of the Carnegie fund is appreciated by those who have made generous gifts of land to the city, on which new Branch library buildings were erected with the fund generously provided by Mr. Carnegie. There still remain large sections of the city, notably the southeast, south, southwest and west wards, in need of libraries.<sup>11</sup>

After construction of the approximately the first dozen branch libraries on donated or already city-owned property, the Free Library moved to acquire library sites in underserved areas. This productive period of branch library construction focused on addressing the shortage of Carnegie branches in the southern and western parts of the city. In 1907, the Mechanics Institute site at 5<sup>th</sup> and Washington in South Philadelphia was donated to the city, paving the way for the first Carnegie branch in this area. The Mechanics Institute was a cultural and educational organization for working class men. Often these institutes had libraries, but it is unknown whether a collection was donated to the Free Library as well as land in this instance. The property would become the new Southwark branch for a densely developed working class neighborhood.<sup>12</sup> The Southwark area was the oldest settlement in Philadelphia, dating back to Swedish settlers in the 1630s. The Southwark name, after a neighborhood in London, was first used for this vicinity in 1762.<sup>13</sup>

Initially the expectation was that additional property would needed in order to proceed with the branch library. Although the donated site was deemed too small, it was finally determined that efforts to acquire more land for the Southwark Branch would not be successful and the decision was made to proceed on the old Mechanics' Institute site.<sup>14</sup> Previously Thomson mentioned that this branch library building was particularly "wanted in that teeming population of persons in straightened circumstances and of foreign extraction."<sup>15</sup> As with the Richmond, Haddington, and South Philadelphia branches, the Free Library had a progressive consciousness regarding the benefit of libraries in poor, immigrant neighborhoods, even as they received requests for new branch libraries from across the city.

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<sup>11</sup> Free Library of Philadelphia, *Thirteenth Annual Report* (1908), 9. The President's Letter included in this volume was dated January 1909.

<sup>12</sup> Free Library of Philadelphia, *Twelfth Annual Report* (1907), 13.

<sup>13</sup>History of Southwark Branch (now Charles Santore Branch) on the Free Library website at [www.freelibrary.org/branches/history.cfm?loc+SWK](http://www.freelibrary.org/branches/history.cfm?loc+SWK)

<sup>14</sup> Free Library of Philadelphia, *Fifteenth Annual Report* (1910), 15. The Report of the Librarian in this volume was dated April 1911.

<sup>15</sup> Free Library of Philadelphia, *Thirteenth Annual Report* (1908), 14.

Nationally prominent Philadelphia architect David Knickerbacker Boyd (1872-1944) was first added to the list of potential branch library architects in September 1905.<sup>16</sup> He was officially appointed on October 11, 1907 to design the Southwark branch, but work was delayed due to the desire to acquire additional property described above.<sup>17</sup> D. K. Boyd attended Friends' Central School and other preparatory schools before training at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts (1887-89) and Spring Garden Institute (1889). He was listed as a draftsman in the 1892 city directories and by 1894 he formed the practice of Boyd & Boyd with his younger Laurence Visscher Boyd. Much of his early work was residential, particularly his designs for Philadelphia suburban speculative developers Wendell & Smith. Boyd was in individual practice from 1898 until 1914. He then created a firm with several younger architects and continued to practice jointly under various names until 1935. Boyd remained in individual practice until his death in 1944.<sup>18</sup>

Southwark Branch was Boyd's only known library design, although he designed a wide variety of building types. The library commission came at a mid-point in Boyd's long and prolific career; at the time he was practicing independently. He was already a long-standing member of the T-Square Club and the American Institute of Architects (AIA). He became a fellow of the AIA in 1908, in addition to working for numerous other professional and civic organizations. Sandra Tatman wrote that "although his early architectural practice. . . was chiefly limited to residences and residential development, Boyd expanded his field of interest by working tirelessly in the profession and in cultural, historical, and city organizations."<sup>19</sup>

In June 1910, after the decision was made to proceed on the donated Mechanics Institute property, the Carnegie Fund Committee requested \$60,000 for construction of the Southwark Branch.<sup>20</sup> By November 1910 the Carnegie Fund Committee examined Boyd's plans and referred any alterations to Thomson and Ashhurst. As per its usual procedure, the Committee instructed the architect to prepare specifications once the plans were finalized.<sup>21</sup> The Carnegie Fund Committee meeting minutes for January 13, 1911 noted that a list of invited bidders for the Southwark contracts was being prepared. The contracts were awarded to the lowest bidders in May 1911. F. A. Havens & Company received the general contract with a bid of \$36,823. The heating contract was awarded to John P. Smith for \$5,800, and the electrical contract to United Electric Construction Co. for \$1,600. The total for all of the bids was \$44,223.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Free Library of Philadelphia, Carnegie Fund Committee Meeting Minutes, (29 September 1905).

<sup>17</sup> Free Library of Philadelphia, Carnegie Fund Committee Meeting Minutes, (11 October 1907).

<sup>18</sup> "David Knickerbacker Boyd," in Roger Moss and Sandra Tatman, *Biographical Dictionary of Philadelphia Architects, 1700-1930*. (New York: G.K. Hall & Company, 1984), 89-92; See also listing for "David Knickerbacker Boyd," in [www.philadelphiabuildings.org](http://www.philadelphiabuildings.org)

<sup>19</sup> Tatman quote from listing for "David Knickerbacker Boyd," on [www.philadelphiabuildings.org](http://www.philadelphiabuildings.org).

<sup>20</sup> Free Library of Philadelphia, Carnegie Fund Committee Meeting Minutes, (11 June 1910).

<sup>21</sup> Free Library of Philadelphia, Carnegie Fund Committee Meeting Minutes, (25 November 1910).

<sup>22</sup> Free Library of Philadelphia, Carnegie Fund Committee Meeting Minutes, (12 May 1911), 5.

Work began on the Southwark Branch on June 10, 1911. *The Philadelphia Inquirer* reported that “the building will be of brick, with stone trimmings, 63 feet 5 inches by 60 feet in dimensions, and will cost \$40,000.”<sup>23</sup> In the *Free Library Annual Report* for 1911, President Henry Edmunds noted that Southwark, one of several branches under construction, would open by October 1912. He again expressed regret about the small site and hope that the library could be extended along Ellsworth if three small houses could be acquired. The lack of a lecture wing like the other Carnegie branches was particularly troubling. Edmunds wrote in the official report, “the present lecture room. . . is hardly likely to prove equal to the requirements of the residents of the neighborhood.”<sup>24</sup> The lecture room for this branch would hold approximately 150 patrons – smaller than most others – while these programs were especially popular in this neighborhood.

Construction proceeded during the rest of 1911 and into 1912. In February 1912, a letter from Boyd to the Carnegie Fund Committee revealed the administrative process for paying the contractor and architects. Havens & Co. requested a payment of \$7,364.60 upon completion of the plastering. Boyd also enclosed his bill of \$250 for service to date including “all detail drawings and supervision.” The builder would receive two more payments – one upon completion and another 60 days later. A final payment to the architect of \$300 would be due at the same time as the final contractor payment.<sup>25</sup> The branch was officially opened on November 8, 1912. The final cost was \$51,489.30.<sup>26</sup> Although library officials were pleased to see the project completed, their lamentations that the building was not large enough continued almost immediately.<sup>27</sup>

The William Rau photographs of Southwark Branch published in the 1912 *Free Library Annual Report* show the symmetrical brick library in a closely developed urban neighborhood. A group of men and young boys stand on the raised entrance stoop. For the interior view, the large and open library space has five female librarians seated at the central desk with railings leading to the main entrance. Patrons of various ages are posed around the room or reading at the tables. The space is dominated by a dramatic spilt staircase leading to a landing and open mezzanine. The two flights of quarter turn with landing stairs come down near either side of the central desk. The Children’s Reading Room was located in the lower space under the mezzanine. Tall bookshelves line the outer walls under the windows.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> “Track Removal Stimulates Mart,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 11 June 1911, 6.

<sup>24</sup> Free Library of Philadelphia, *Sixteenth Annual Report* (1911), 18.

<sup>25</sup> Free Library of Philadelphia, Carnegie Fund Committee Meeting Minutes, (17 May 1912). The letter from Boyd entered into the meeting minutes was dated February 6, 1912. The Committee approved this payment schedule at their meeting on October 4, 1912.

<sup>26</sup> Photographs with statistics on reverse, Director’s Vault, Central Branch, Free Library of Philadelphia.

<sup>27</sup> See Free Library of Philadelphia, *Nineteenth Annual Report* (1914), 26.

<sup>28</sup> William Rau photographs in Free Library of Philadelphia, *Seventeenth Annual Report* (1912); A published first floor plan indicated the use of various spaces on this level. A ground floor plan was not included. See plates in *The American Architect* 103, no. 1954 (4 June 1913) and *The American Architect* 108, no. 2087 (22 December 1915).



The small site constrained the ability to design the Southwark Branch according to the accepted T-plan model, instead creating a nearly square plan structure that used a mezzanine to create additional interior space. In some respects the more vertical design and tightly developed site make this branch more like those built in New York City. However like the other Philadelphia branches, this building is oriented horizontally, with the entrance at the center of the longer side. New York branches, at least in Manhattan, tended to take on more of an urban villa form with a shorter elevation facing the street. This branch is elevated on a raised basement like the other branches; the location of the main spaces above the street in *piano nobile* fashion is clearly readable from the exterior fenestration. A secondary entrance is visible at ground level on the side elevation, probably to allow direct access to a lecture room located on this level. In 1917 author Theodore Wesley Koch pointed out that a large room undivided by partitions became a defining feature of Carnegie branches across the country, as was providing a space for lectures. He notes that the lecture program was particularly successful in Philadelphia, where “each branch has a recognized clientele and lecturers are always sure of a good sized audience.”<sup>29</sup>

In her study of the Carnegie Library, architectural historian Abigail Van Slyck discusses the contemporaneous struggle within the library profession over conflicting philosophies of restricting access to reading material and newer ideals of community involvement.<sup>30</sup> Van Slyck also discusses the importance of children’s rooms and specialized outreach to young readers as a new characteristic of libraries in this period.<sup>31</sup> In the case of the Southwark branch and its predominantly foreign born clientele, the Free Library considered outreach to the children as a key means to reach their parents and promote “Americanization.” As noted by librarian John Ashhurst in the 1920 *Annual Report*:

All books in the thirty Children’s Rooms are in English, and include large numbers of American histories and biographies. These books are taken home by the children, and in addition to being read by them, are often read by older members of the family who speak and read English with difficulty.<sup>32</sup>

Southwark and other Philadelphia libraries demonstrate a progressive commitment to open stack branches and encouraging young patrons with special children’s reading rooms, but also a desire to control this public space. Here opposing impulses were

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<sup>29</sup> Theodore Wesley Koch, *A Book of Carnegie Libraries*, (New York: The H.W. Wilson Company, 1917), 86. On the New York Carnegie branches see Mary B. Dierickx, *The Architecture of Literacy: The Carnegie Libraries of New York City*. (New York City: The Cooper Union for the Advancement of Art and Science & NYC Department of General Services, September 1996), and “The Carnegie Libraries in New York City,” *Architectural Record* 17, no. 3 (March 1905): 237-246.

<sup>30</sup> Abigail Van Slyck, *Free to All: Carnegie Libraries and American Culture, 1890-1920*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 122.

<sup>31</sup> See Van Slyck, “Chapter 6 – Reading: The Experience of Children as Library Users.”

<sup>32</sup> Free Library of Philadelphia, *Twenty-Fourth Annual Report*, (1920), 19. Other branches specifically listed as performing “Americanization work” were Haddington, South Philadelphia, and Richmond.

balanced by stationing the main librarians' desk in front of the entrance where patrons could be observed by the staff. This arrangement was used in all of the Free Library Carnegie branches and continues today.

On November 1, 1963 the Southwark Branch reopened in a new structure at 932 South 7<sup>th</sup> Street (7<sup>th</sup> & Carpenter Streets). The original building is owned by the Greater Philadelphia Oversees Chinese Association and used as the Dr. Sun Yat Sen Bilingual School and Senior Citizen Group. It has been heavily altered inside. Although no longer used as a branch library, the Carnegie structure retains its historic character and use as an important community educational space.<sup>33</sup>

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: The former Southwark Branch library is a symmetrical Georgian Revival structure with a formal axial entrance at the center of the front façade. The Georgian Revival appearance is achieved mainly through the decorative details focused on the main entrance, the use of dark red brick laid in a Flemish bond pattern with glazed headers, and a heavy limestone cornice with dentils. The library stands one tall story high on a raised basement like many Carnegie libraries. Unlike most other Philadelphia Carnegie branches, it is nearly square in plan.

2. Condition of fabric: Good

### B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: This structure is roughly 60 feet by 60 feet, with each façade divided into three large bays.

2. Foundation: The former Southwark Branch sits high above street level on a raised basement approximately five feet high. The primarily brick Flemish bond foundation sits on a course of dressed limestone and is topped by a wide limestone water table with a ovolo and cavetto molding across the top. The water table continues, but without the additional molding, on the rear (west) façade. The date "1911" is carved into the water table at the southeast corner.

3. Walls: The walls are dark red brick laid in a Flemish bond with glazed headers. There is a dressed limestone belt course that runs along the sill of the main window openings. There is another belt course along the tops of these window openings formed by a pattern in the brick of alternating sets of three horizontal and three vertical bricks sandwiched between rows of headers. Another brick belt course of a row of headers over a row of soldiers is located at the top of the wall below the cornice. There are rectangular

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<sup>33</sup> History of Southwark Branch (now Charles Santore Branch) on the Free Library website at [www.freelibrary.org/branches/history.cfm?loc+SWK](http://www.freelibrary.org/branches/history.cfm?loc+SWK)

limestone spandrel panels below each window. On the street façades (east and south) the spandrel panels contain a smaller blank rectangle with beveled edges. On the rear (west) façade the spandrel is a smooth slab of limestone. On the west façade and the rear bays of the two side façade where the internal mezzanine changes the fenestration pattern the large space between windows is outlined with header bricks. A single white glazed headers is located at each corner of the large rectangle of red brick headers. The corners of the structure are double notched at the two front edges and single notched at the two rear.

4. Structural system, framing: This former library has load bearing brick masonry walls and a brick and limestone foundation. Presumably the large trusses used to support the roof and span the open reading room spaces are hidden by a plaster ceiling.

5. Chimney: There is one tall external chimney at the northwest corner of the building, situated perpendicular to the rear wall. The chimney is constructed of dark red brick laid in a Flemish bond with glazed headers. It has a metal cap that looks like a recent replacement. This chimney originally was connected to a coal burning boiler in the basement.

#### 6. Openings

a. Doorways and Doors: The main doorway is located at the center of the east façade. It is accessed via a raised limestone landing with a straight run of stairs parallel to the main façade on each side. The front of the raised landing has a recessed panel in the limestone that matches the spandrels in the wall. The limestone staircases have tread returns, and a bottom curtail step. The original wrought iron railing have been replaced with similar metal ones. The door surround is a large Classical limestone entablature with scrolled volute brackets supporting the edges of the cornice. A band of dentils is located between the cornice and the unornamented frieze. The original overdoor panel with the carved words "SOUTHWARK BRANCH" "FREE LIBRARY OF PHILADELPHIA" is covered by a plywood sign announcing the current occupants. The wide molding around the door frame has an inner raised section at the door with returns at the top corners and partial pilasters tucked into the reveal. The original exterior wood pocket doors are still extant. Each of the pair of doors has two raised panels of unequal size – a square one in the top third of the door and tall rectangular one in the bottom two thirds.

A secondary doorway is located at sidewalk level on the south or Ellsworth Street façade. The opening is framed by a tall semicircular brick blind arch with a limestone keystone and spring blocks. Originally a pair of wood doors is set directly into the brick wall. Now there appears to be replacement metal doors behind a roll down security grate.

Another service doorway is located at ground level on the west façade. The water table returns to outline the opening in the brick foundation. Originally this opening would have provided access to a narrow alley, but currently the adjacent lot is a basketball court/play space for the occupants of the former library.

b. Windows: The original windows have been altered due to the extension of the mezzanine throughout the interior space. Originally the main windows on the front and side facades were large openings with three sets of three large lights each (the window above the main door had two rows of three lights). The double hung sashes were set directly into the brick wall and separated by large flat muntins outlined by thin strips of molding. Now the center row is filled by stucco and the deteriorated wood sash covered with security grates fill the top and bottom openings. The original flat limestone window hoods remain. Each has an arched center section flanked by rectangular sections and square corner block. Each of these sections is defined by thin projecting molding carved into the stone. The corner blocks extend beyond the edge of the window openings. The windows have a projecting limestone sill with a curved edge.

Smaller sets of three one over one windows without decorative hoods are located at the original mezzanine and first floor levels on the rear bays of the side façade and on the rear façade. These windows are set directly into the brick wall with limestone sills. The first floor windows have the same projecting curved sill as the large windows. The smaller mezzanine windows located directly below the cornice have plain flat sills.

The basement level has similar sets of three one over one wood sash windows on the east and south façade in the raised foundation below the largest window openings. The windows here are separated by narrow brick piers.

There is one later window opening cut through the wall just above the water table at the southeast corner of the main façade. The opening contains a small one over one sash window covered with a metal security grate.

7. Roof: The former Southwark Branch has a low pitched hipped roof surrounded by a low brick parapet with limestone coping. It is covered with a rubberized sheathing. There is a pyramidal skylight structure near the front center of the roof that is now covered over.

#### C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans: The interior of this former branch library was not accessible. A brief glimpse did indicate that the open space and staircase are now entirely altered by the expansion of the mezzanine floor across the entire space.
2. Stairway: The original stairway for the former South Philadelphia Branch is no longer extant.
3. Flooring: The original hardwood floors are no longer visible or have been replaced.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: not accessible
5. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors:

Main entrance: There is a small wood interior vestibule projecting from the main doorway. There is a small flight of stairs inside this vestibule leading to the original main reading room floor.

b. Windows: The original interior windows have been altered by the expansion of the mezzanine floor.

6. Decorative features and trim: not accessible

7. Mechanical equipment:

a. Heating, air conditioning, ventilation: It is likely that the original boiler system has been replaced.

b. Lighting: Historic photographs indicate that a series of four metal chandeliers with round globes hung from the main room ceiling, one at the center of each large square.<sup>34</sup> These electric chandeliers had eight sets of upward and downward fixtures arranged around an open hoop with s-curve arms and round glass globes. In addition, sconces with one upward and one downward round globe were mounted along the top edge of the outer wall book shelves. It is unlikely that these fixtures are still extant. A pair of cast iron sconces originally flanking the exterior entrance is no longer extant.

c. Plumbing: The library would have been built with basic bathroom and kitchen facilities.

D. Site: The library is located right at the front of the property line at the sidewalk, a typical arrangement in this densely developed neighborhood with small lots.

### PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Architectural Drawings: Identical first floor plans and one exterior photograph appear in two issues of *The American Architect* – volume 103, no. 1954 (4 June 1913) and volume 108, no. 2087 (22 December 1915).

B. Early Views: William Rau photographs (one exterior and one interior) in the Free Library *Annual Report* for 1912.

#### C. Bibliography

The records of the Free Library of Philadelphia are located at the Central Library on Vine Street. The *Annual Reports* are located in the Municipal Reference Division, Cities P53-1154; and the Carnegie Fund Committee Minute Books are located in the Director's Vault (access by special permission).

Bobinski, George S. *Carnegie Libraries: Their History and Impact on American Public Library Development*. Chicago: American Library Association, 1969.

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<sup>34</sup> Interior photograph published in Free Library of Philadelphia *Annual Report*, (1912).

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#### PART IV: PROJECT INFORMATION

The documentation of the former Southwark Branch Library was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) of the Heritage Documentation Programs of the National Park Service, Richard O'Connor, Chief, during summer 2007 as part of a larger initiative to record the Carnegie funded branch libraries of the Free Library of Philadelphia. The project is sponsored by HABS in cooperation with the Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia, John A. Gallery, director; and the Free Library of Philadelphia, William J. Fleming, Administrative Services Director, and made possible through a Congressional appropriation for recording in Southeastern Pennsylvania. The historical reports were prepared by Lisa P. Davidson and Catherine C. Lavoie. Large-format photography was undertaken for HABS by Joseph Elliott.